To Maria Jose Domingos

TL 1148

Dear Maria,

I talked to Sister Monica and arranged to Fax the material to her tomorrow.

Sorry to be so late in writing the article. The speaking tour campaign and various other things got in the way. I am afraid that the article I have written in abstract and boring. Please feel free to edit it. I restricted myself to the Coalition, not mentioning what the Japanese Catholics are doing, for instance. Let me know if there are other things which I have neglected that should be included.

Sincerely,

Jean Inglis

The East Timor Solidarity Movement in Japan

It's history

When the Indonesian military invaded East Timor, young people in Tokyo and Osaka demonstrated and occupied the Indonesian consulate in protest. It seems that due to lack of information (the Japanese media largely ignored the invasion, and the Asia-oriented, human rights groups followed suit) these solidarity actions were not able to be sustained. Meanwhile the Japanese government pursued a policy, uncriticized by any sector in Japan, of diplomatic and economic support for Indonesia.

In the early 1980s information on the situation in East Timor came into my hands and myself and others in the YWCA in Kure (a small town near Hiroshima) began solidarity work. Our amateurish efforts to translate information into Japanese were very slow and painstaking, but by late 1983 more competent spokespersons were beginning to publicize the issue in their fora. Some of these people were able to use their positions to arrange to have a Fretilin member come to Japan in 1985. Arranging a modest speaking tour for our first Fretilin guest provided the impetus for the launching of two other solidarity groups, in Tokyo and Osaka. Also, for the first time we were able to interest some of the mass media. Concerned people from a wider public were able to get in touch with us, and realizing that ongoing groups existed, some of them committed themselves to start solidarity work. (One man, for instance, committed himself to organizing Diet members, and the present 85-member Diet Forum on the East Timor Issue is the result.) In 1986 the first lengthy, in-depth booklet on the East Timor issue was published by the Osaka solidarity group. Since then, four full-length books on the East Timor struggle have been published in Japanese, and solidarity groups have contributed in some way to all of them. Every year since 1985 our solidarity network has invited East Timorese spokespeople to Japan for a speaking tour. These tours provide a good opportunity to bring the issue "physically" to Japan, and as a result of these tours

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Free East Timor Japan Coalition

At present there are nine solidarity groups formally associated in the coalition. (There are several other solidarity groups which, though not members of the coalition, work closely with us.) Each group works in its own way in its own region, and joint coalition projects such as the annuual speaking tour are planned and decided on at national coalition meetings held three or four times a year. The coalition does not have a formalized "charter", nor are there any "rules", but I think it would be accurate to say that all member groups consider the withdrawal of Indonesia and the realization of self-determintion of the Maubere people the goal toward which we are working. As our specific goal in Japan we aim to change the hitherto ignorant and indifferent attitude of the Japanese public to one of understanding and support. This is, of course, a prerequisite for changing the government policy of collaboration with Indonesia. There is no coalition office, no "staff", no spokesperson so, for instance, in the case of emergency actions, decisions have to be made through telephone consulatations. Also when a group proposes an action, it usually has to take the responsibility of coordinating the follow-through. Most of the individual members have full-time jobs so meetings and "work" are usually done at night and on Sunday.

Level of Awareness in the Public

Although the activities of the solidarity groups have raised the level of awareness of the East Timor issue in certain sectors of the public, I think it would be fair to say that the mass of the people is still not aware of the issue. We have not yet succeeded in making "East Timor" a household word in Japan. For this, a well planned approach to the television media is needed.

The Intransigent LDP (Japanese Government) and the issue of ODA

Aside from specific East Timor solidarity work, we face the same basic challenge as all third-world solidarity groups in Japan: the solidly entrenched big-business-oriented Liberal Democratic Party government and its policy of rewarding repressive dictatorial governments with hugh amounts of economic aid. As all of

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Aside from specific East Timor solidarity work, we face the same basic challenge as all third-world solidarity groups in Japan: the solidly entrenched big-business-oriented Liberal Democratic Party government and its policy of rewarding repressive dictatorial governments with hugh amounts of economic aid. As all of our East Timorese visitors remind us (especially the ones who have personally lived under the Indonesian occupation), " your government's ODA is helping Indonesia to exterminate us." The challenge to stop this economic aid is a staggering one and of course is a task that will demand a radical change in Japanese politics and society. So far our coalition has hardly begun to respond, but I hope that, in cooperation with other organizations, we can move forward on this issue step by step.

JEAN INGLIS 0823-22-0962 90年10月25日 (木) 16:07 P.03

Links with Portuguese Solidarity Groups

As a late-comer neophyte, the Japanese solidarity movement has depended greatly on information and ideas from the Portuguese solidarity groups. This situation will no doubt continue, as your country is in a particularly strategic position in relation to this issue. We greatly appreciate you efforts to make information accessible to us by translating much of it into English. Thank you, and please continue to encourage us by your solidarity work in Portugal and elsewhere in Europe!

Jean Inglis
Kure YWCA East Timor Concerns Group

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JAPAN TIMES Oct. 25, 1990

Clashes reported in East Timor

LISBON (Reuter-Kyodo) Indonesian troops in East Timor clashed several times earlier this month with students demanding independence for the territory, Timorese student sources in Lisbon said Tuesday.

At least five students were taken to a hospital with serious injuries and two more were taken away by soldiers in a series of incidents between Oct. 8 and 17, they said.

The security forces are still seeking six independence activists while a night curfew is in force in parts of the territory's capital, Dili, the sources said.

The reports, from the Maubere Youth Service, were brought to Portugal by refugees from East Timor over the past few days. There was no independent confirmation.

Clashes in East Timor

Asahi Evening News Oct. 24, 1990

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